



New England Ratepayers Association

August 28, 2013

The Honorable Fred Upton
Chairman
Committee on Energy Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

The Honorable Henry Waxman
Ranking Member
Committee on Energy and Commerce
U.S. House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20510

Re: Support for H.R. 1900, the "Natural Gas Pipeline Permitting Reform Act"

Messrs. Upton and Waxman:

The New England Ratepayers Association (NERA), a non-profit, public advocacy group which represents the rights of ratepayers throughout New England, strongly supports H.R. 1900, the "Natural Gas Pipeline and Permitting Reform Act". The enactment of H.R. 1900 would provide much needed streamlining to the natural gas pipeline permitting process, which would be of great benefit to the ratepayers of New England.

Currently New England ratepayers suffer from the highest electricity rates of any other region in the country. A significant reason for this is the limited capacity of natural gas pipelines which the electricity generators throughout New England rely on. Most of New England's firm natural gas supply goes to Local Distribution Companies (LDCs), providing home heating fuel to customers during the colder months -- which means these LDCs are "first in line." Because of this, during cold snaps that frequent New England, supply is restricted to electricity generators, putting stress on the electrical grid and causing marginal rates to increase -- as much as 500% this past winter. Those price spikes are eventually passed onto the ratepayers.

Entergy recently announced its plan to decommission Vermont Yankee Nuclear Power Plant. This action will remove another 620 MW of power from New England's electricity grid. This announcement, coupled with the expected or impending closures of a number of power plants throughout New England, exacerbates the need for new reliable baseload power generation. However, without an expansion of natural gas pipeline into the region, we will not be able to

thoroughly take advantage of the abundant natural gas supply that the United States currently enjoys.

H.R. 1900 will require the Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC) to approve or reject a pipeline certificate within a year. Furthermore, language in the bill will empower FERC with the authority to enforce permitting deadlines on other involved agencies—requiring that a permit be issued if an agency doesn't respond within 90 days after FERC completes its final environmental document relating to the project.

The ratepayers of New England desperately need more access to natural gas. H.R. 1900 will streamline the permitting process, reduce current inefficiencies and ultimately lead to greater natural gas pipeline infrastructure in the region. For these reasons NERA strongly supports H.R. 1900.

Sincerely,

Marc Brown
Executive Director
New England Ratepayers Association